

waste human potentialities, as we are now, by failing to provide adequate elementary and secondary education for millions of children.” Equal opportunity in education is America’s ticket to the future. It is a bedrock value in this country. It is indispensable to the 21st century for individuals and for our Nation alike. Fifty years ago it was Quonset huts; today, it’s trailers and broken buildings.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank all of you who worked to fix this building. I ask you to leave here on this Labor Day committed to fix all the buildings. I thank you for the applause you gave Le’Shia, and I thank all of her fellow students and their families for being here. I ask you to leave here thinking about all the little boys and girls like them all across America. I have been back and forth across this country, and I have seen the conditions that exist here today everywhere, in the largest cities and the smallest towns. There is nothing more important.

Here in Norfolk we honor our military, which has made such a major contribution to this community. I want to thank the Navy Band for being here today, by the way. Thank you very much.

There are those who believe that—and I saw some of their signs outside—that we don’t need

a strong military today because the cold war is over. I can tell you that’s not true either. We still have significant challenges to your security. But I also want you to understand something I know you know, which is, maybe more than anything else, the future security of the United States of America will rest upon our ability to give every single child in this country the ability to do well in a global economy, in a global society, to live up to his or her dreams. That’s what we’re here on this Labor Day to support.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:28 p.m. on the playground. In his remarks, he referred to student Le’Shia Jamison, who introduced the President; Mayor Paul D. Fraim of Norfolk; John O. Simpson, superintendent, Norfolk Public School District; Anita O. Poston, chairman, Norfolk Public School Board; John J. Sweeney, president, AFL-CIO; Robert A. Georgine, president, Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO; James R. Leaman, secretary-treasurer, Virginia State AFL-CIO; Cheri James, president, Virginia Education Association; and Ronald I. Dozoretz, founder, FHC Health Systems.

Remarks at a Labor Day Picnic in Newport News, Virginia *September 6, 1999*

Thank you very much. Let me just begin by saying how grateful I am for the wonderful reception you have given me. You know, I can’t tell you how much I appreciate the kindness and friendship that you have given to me and my family, my Vice President and his family, and our administration, through two Presidential elections and 6½ years of our 8-year term. I thank you.

I want to thank Congressman Sisisky and Delegate Crittenden here, who gave a pretty good reason for keeping Senator Robb in office, and I hope you’ll listen to her.

I want you to know what we were doing before we came here. We were actually working on a school, to highlight one of the things I’m trying to get this Congress to do, which is to

pass a bill that would help us to build or modernize 6,000 new schools so our kids, whether they’re rich or poor, will have world-class places to go to school in.

So I want to thank the Secretary of Education, the national head of the AFL-CIO, John Sweeney and Secretary Riley, and the leaders of our two great teachers’ organizations, the NEA and the AFT, Bob Chase and Sandy Feldman. They’re all over here with me. Give them a hand. *[Applause]*

Now, you know, somebody asked me the day before yesterday why I was coming down here. They said, “You’re not running for anything anymore; you can’t.” And I said, “Well, yes, but I haven’t lost my memory, and those people

gave me two great terms as President. I wanted to go down and thank them.”

And these two guys are—I want you to take care of Bobby Scott. He is a great resource for you and for the country. And I want you—you know, every time Senator Robb runs, he has a challenging race. You know why? Because he sticks up for you, that’s why. Because he makes the hard decisions for the long run, because he was one of those guys who stood up in 1993. We didn’t have a vote to spare. If he had changed his vote, I would have lost that economic plan that’s given us 19.4 million jobs and the biggest surplus in history. And they tried to beat him 2 years later because he stood up for you. Because he believes we all ought to go forward together. And I’ve known him for nearly 20 years now, and he’s always standing up. So next time the election comes around, I want you to stand up for him. Will you do it? *[Applause]*

Now, let me say this. This is Labor Day, so I want to make some remarks about labor. There are a lot of big issues in this country today, but when I got elected President, it was after 12 years of people in the other party running the White House saying they were pro-business and good for the economy, and we had the worst recession since the Great Depression and the biggest deficit in history, and we quadrupled the debt in 12 years.

I said I’m pro-business, but I’m pro-labor, too. I don’t think you can help the economy if you hurt the working people. Guess what? We beat off all their efforts to weaken unions. We beat back all their efforts to hurt the fundamental interests of working people. We passed the Family and Medical Leave Act. We raised the minimum wage once. We helped people with child care who were working more, and we got 19.4 million jobs, record numbers of new small businesses every year, the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded. It works. If you take care of ordinary people, it works.

So on this Labor Day, as we go back to work, I’d like to just mention some things that relate to you. Number one, we ought to raise the minimum wage again. Number two, we ought to do a better job of enforcing the law that says there should be equal pay for equal work between men and women. Number three, we ought to do more to help workers with children at home, working full-time, succeed by helping

them with their child care expenses more. Number four, we ought to give investors, people with money, the same tax incentives to invest in poor neighborhoods in America we give them to invest overseas in poor neighborhoods, because we all know that not every neighborhood has been fully benefited by this economic expansion. I’ve been out there across the country, in the cities, in the small towns, in the rural areas, on the Indian reservations, up and down the Mississippi River. You know as well as I do that in every part of America, there are still people in places who would work or work harder and better if they had a chance to do so, and I am determined to see that we don’t stop this until everybody’s involved. Number four, we ought—before we have this big tax cut the Republicans have proposed, we ought to take care of the big challenges facing America. We ought to make sure Social Security and Medicare are going to be all right when all the baby boomers retire. We’ve got the largest number of children in our schools in history, and they’re more diverse than ever before. We ought to make sure they’ve got a world-class education before we give the money away. And I think that we ought to get this country out of debt for the first time since 1835, before we give the money away.

Now, let me tell you why that ought to matter to you. Because if the Government is not borrowing money, that means that you’re not in competition with the Government; that means you can borrow cheaper; that means home mortgages are lower; that means car payments are lower; that means credit card payments are lower; that means college loan payments are lower; that means more businesses, more jobs, a stronger economy for the future. That’s why I want to get America out of debt, because it’s good for little people.

You know, I’ll be retired pretty soon; debt will be good for me. I’ve got a good pension; I can buy those Government bonds all day long. I can make money out of debt. You’ll make money if we get out of debt and your interest rates are lower and the economy grows more. And I want these children to have a good economy to grow up into. So you just remember this. Nothing that has happened in this country in the last 6½ years that I have achieved as President could have been possible without others, beginning with the people that work with me, starting with the Vice President, going to

the people in Congress like Senator Robb and Bobby Scott and Norm Sisisky; and going all the way down to the grassroots in America, the people like you that voted for us.

So, on this Labor Day, as you leave here, if somebody asks you, what did the President say, tell them he said, "We had an idea and it worked. That helping ordinary people works,

and it requires people like you to be good citizens and keep people like them in office. And if you do, it will keep right on working."

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:10 p.m., at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to State Delegate Flora Davis Crittenden.

Remarks at Brooke Grove Elementary School in Olney, Maryland *September 7, 1999*

Thank you so much. You know, when I was in grade school, we used to joke that our favorite class was assembly. [*Laughter*] But you've been out here so long, and it's so hot, I'm not sure it's true anymore. [*Laughter*] I will try to be brief.

I want to, first of all, say how greatly honored I am to be here with Governor Glendening and Senator Sarbanes and Congressman Cardin and your Representative, Congresswoman Morella; with Senator Miller and the other members of the Maryland legislature; with your principal, Eoline Cary; Jerry Weast, the Montgomery County superintendent. I want to thank the teachers in the classes whom I visited, Ms. Tepper and Ms. Husted, and their students, who asked good questions and got me to read a book, a book about friendship, which I could use a little of myself from time to time. [*Laughter*] I want to thank the teachers, the parents, and the students. And I want to thank Nancy Grasmick, and Reggie Felton, the chair of the Montgomery County School Board, and all the people in Maryland for their dedication. And I thank you, Robin Davis, for your introduction and for your devotion to teaching. And we have also on the stage with us Jessica Goldstein, who is another one of the reading specialists, also hired under our program.

Most of all, if I might, I'd like to say a special word of thanks to my friend of over 20 years, the Secretary of Education, Dick Riley. I think, plainly, the finest Education Secretary this country has ever had. And I really thank him for his leadership.

I knew before I came here that this was a blue ribbon school. Now that I've been here, I know why. I loved walking down the halls;

I loved reading the posters on the walls; I loved talking to the students and watching the instruction. Education is the priority in this school. Education must be America's priority, as well.

We now have in our schools, starting last year for the first time since the end of World War II, we've got a group of students in our schools bigger than the baby boom generation, the largest number of children ever in the schools of the United States, and as all of you know, it's also the most diverse group of students ever, racially, religiously, culturally. We have the largest number of students in our schools whose first language is not English, by far in the history of the country. And yet, we know that in a global society our diversity can be an enormous asset if, but only if, we can give every one of our children a world-class education. And we don't have a moment to lose.

I'm here because for 6½ years we have worked very hard to raise standards, to raise expectations, to raise accountability, and to raise the level of support so that every child in America could have an education like the children of Brooke Grove Elementary get. And I think that's what all of you want.

As I indicated, Dick Riley and I have been working on this issue for more than 20 years now. Both Hillary and I made it our first priority when I was Governor of my State for 12 years. Earlier this year I proposed an education accountability plan based on what I have seen working for more than a decade now, to help raise standards, make good schools even better, and have specific initiatives to help turn around schools that aren't making the grade; to provide more funds for after-school and summer school programs for the kids who need it; to expand